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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Wednesday, May 5, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WET BLANKETS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Listeners, spring weather has a way of sneaking up and catching your Aunt Sammy napping. First thing she knows May has arrived -- before she has gotten around to talking about washing winter bedding, particularly the blankets and pillows. And, me oh my, how the little spring clothes moths do love to find soiled blankets or pillow-feathers lying undisturbed in a warm dark closet! Right then and there invitations to the feast are out.

But, listeners, if you haven't yet laundered your blankets, you have this consolation -- a soft, warm, sunny May day with a light wind blowing is ideal for drying blankets. So fill the tub with suds -- mild suds and lukewarm water, and string up the clothes line. You can fool the moths yet.

Maybe you never thought of your wool blankets as sensitive. But, odd as it sounds, any textile expert will tell you that all wool fabrics when wet are very sensitive to many things -- to rubbing or other rough handling, to extremes of heat and cold, to changes in temperature, and to any alkali, including strong soap, washing powder or very hard water. If you understand how sensitive wool is and treat it accordingly, you won't have to worry about whether your blankets are going to shrink or harden or turn yellow. And even though you've been washing blankets every spring for many a year, it is a wise precaution to consider the ways of wool in water before you put your blankets in the tub.

The water happens to be your first consideration in washing blankets so they will come out as light and fluffy as when they went in. Soft water is best for washing blankets. And the right temperature is lukewarm. Wool shrinks in very cold or very hot water. It also shrinks if you use one temperature for washing and another for rinsing. I have seen blankets which never recovered from the shock of plunging from a warm suds into a cold rinsing water. This change caused a sudden contraction of the fibers -- and a permanent one. You see, if a blanket once mats and shrinks, it is likely to stay that way. Not much hope of bringing it back to its original size and fluffiness.

But let's get back to the tub. Lukewarm water, then, for both washing and rinsing. And plenty of it. Wool requires more water in proportion to bulk than any other fabric. I mentioned soft water as a help in washing wool blankets. If possible use naturally soft water -- rain water, if you have it. But avoid water that has been softened with large quantities of alkaline compounds. Borax and ammonia solutions are the safest substances for treating the washing water.

As for the soap, use only mild or neutral soap and no strong washing powders. Mild soap flakes, or soap jelly, make the lukewarm suds for the blankets. Make a thick generous suds, plunge the blanket in, and then squeeze and work the blanket in the suds, but don't rub. Never use a washboard in washing blankets. And never rub a cake of soap directly on the fabric. If the blankets are quite soiled, they may need a wash in a second suds. Press out the excess water and wash in clean suds. Then squeeze out once more and rinse free from soap in several changes of lukewarm water as near the temperature of the suds as possible.

Which reminds me of a question asked the other day. A listener inquired about boiling wool fabric to whiten it, as you boil linen or cotton. The answer is: Never boil wool unless you want to ruin it.

When the blankets are thoroughly rinsed, you can wring them through a wringer, if you set the wringer loosely and are careful not to stretch the blanket as it goes through.

As for drying, hang the blankets on the line with a half or a fourth on one side to ease the weight and the stretch as much as possible. Squeeze the ends occasionally with a bath towel to remove the excess water that weighs the ends down. When the blanket is dry, fluff up the surface by brushing all over with a clean stiff whisk broom. You see, the warmth and comfort of the blanket depend a good deal on the amount of fluffiness or nap.

If the blanket has colored stripes, be careful to hang them straight and perpendicular to the ground. Then, if the dye is inclined to run, it won't be so likely to run into the rest of the blanket.

So much for blankets. Now a word about washing pillows. You can wash pillows without removing the feathers, but usually this is not so satisfactory as the longer job of transferring the feathers to a muslin bag for washing. Here's the way to wash a pillow without taking out the feathers. Scrub in a weak washing-soda solution, using a good suds. Repeat in a second suds if the pillow is quite soiled. Then, rinse in lukewarm water changing it 2 or 3 times. Squeeze out as much of the excess water as possible and dry by laying the pillow on a sheet in the sun or other warm place. Beat the pillows from time to time during drying and turn them from side to side.

Now if you transfer the feathers to a muslin bag, be sure the bag is 2 or 3 times the size of the pillow. Rip open one end of the pillow and sew the edges of the opening to the edges of the muslin bag. Shake the feathers from one to the other. Then separate the two, sew up the muslin bag and wash in the same way as just described for the whole pillow. Wash the pillow ticking separately. By the way, if you take a sponge and apply a stiff starch mixture to the inside of the ticking after washing, it will close the openings in the material and prevent the feathers from working through. Refill the ticking in the same way that it was emptied.

So much for special spring laundry jobs.

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